

FirstNet gets go-ahead to fund key RFP, consultation activities in 2015

Fierce Wireless Tech By Monica Allevan

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The First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) Finance Committee gave FirstNet management the OK to spend up to \$86.2 million in fiscal year 2015, including \$42.5 million on a comprehensive Request for Proposal (RFP) and certain network development activities.

Another \$22.3 million is allocated toward consultation, planning and outreach activities, and up to \$21.4 million may be spent on FirstNet organizational infrastructure, project support and administrative functions.

The funding is less than the \$120 million that was authorized at the FirstNet's September board meeting and supports program roadmap activities in the areas of RFP development for the purpose of identifying and negotiating key private-public partnership arrangements, network planning and development, consulting with regional, state, tribal and local jurisdictions, and organizational operations and infrastructure.

"Today we are funding steps that will help us continue the accomplishment of critical roadmap milestones and move us closer to deploying a nationwide public safety broadband network," said FirstNet Chairwoman [Sue Swenson](#) in a press release. "The resolution supports our top priorities for this fiscal year while taking a measured approach to our operations going forward."

Swenson serves on the Finance Committee with Committee Chair Tim Bryan, Ed Reynolds, James H. Douglas, Frank Plastina and Brian Deese.

On Tuesday, FirstNet Acting General Manager TJ Kennedy appeared before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications hearing on "Interoperable Communications: Assessing Progress Since 9/11." Also at the hearing was Ron Hewitt, director of the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Mark Grubb, representing the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) and Delaware's FirstNet single point of contact (SPOC).

Kennedy provided an update on FirstNet's activities. "Over the past twelve months, we have seen dramatic progress at FirstNet," he said in prepared remarks. "We have grown from four to 83 full time employees, and we have established our headquarters in Reston, Va.," with a technical office in Boulder, Colo., where much of the technical work occurs.

While the organization already has begun conducting consultations with states and territories, Kennedy said FirstNet expects to hold numerous in-person meetings with each of the 56 states and territories over the next year and beyond. The association sent each state an Initial Consultation Package (ICP) back in April.

FirstNet is hiring 10 regional teams to ensure sufficient resources in support of its outreach and state consultation efforts, he said, adding that these FirstNet regions cover the same states, territories and tribal nations as the 10 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions. "Our teams will span the nation to participate in consultation meetings, join various regional and state governing body meetings and association conferences, and meet one-on-one with the state single points of contact and public safety agencies representing potential FirstNet network users," he said.

FirstNet expects to hire these 10 regional leads in late 2014 and early 2015 and bring on additional regional staff throughout 2015 as appropriate to meet its goals.

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